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THE
HAPPY CHRISTIAN,

A DIDACTIC POEM.

BY

CLINTON L. HARLAN.

Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God.—Bible.

Oh, would some power the gift to gi' us,
To see ourselves as others see us;
It would from many a blunder free us,
And foolish notion.—Burns.

DAYTON, OHIO:
CROY & MCFARLAND, PRINTERS.
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PREFACE.

In presenting this poem to the public, I have endeavored to bear in mind the public good. I might have written upon a subject in which the people are more interested; but it is my conviction that the people ought to be more interested in the subject upon which I have written. No other branch of literature can claim the attention of all men; the Christian religion holds just and equal claims upon all.

There are those, no doubt, who will deem it presumptuous in me, a young man whom poverty and poor health have deprived of the advantages of a liberal education, to attempt the elucidation of a subject so abstruse as that of Ethics. To such I would say: judge my labor by its fruits; my aims are right. I am willing to abide the result. I do not expect by the publication of this poem to contribute largely to religious literature, or to accomplish a great deal of good; but I do expect each of my readers to judge of the merits of the poem by the nature of the arguments presented, regardless of the age, scholarship, or social position of its author.

Now I would not wage war against those whom I fain would please; nor am I disposed to dispute, without cause, with authors and publishers respecting the propriety of their literary tastes. But I have reason to believe that the time has come when even the poets may with impunity abandon the study of Mythology, and invoke the aid of the Muses in demonstrating and beautifying the truths of nature and of science.

I know there are those whose sense of propriety would suggest that philosophical subjects can be better set forth in prose; but surely truth can not lose its importance for its being expressed in verse, nor beauty lose its charm for its being made the garb of truth. Nature indiscriminately combines the elements of truth and beauty; and poetry, which is but the music of the mind, is an excellent medium by which we can look

“Through nature up to nature's God,”

and view, in the joy of anticipation, the future glories of the human mind.

As brevity is the soul of wit, so precision is the heart of logic; and if I have sometimes dressed the Muses in a plain attire; it has been purposely done, in order that

“He who runs may read.”

How well a poem by a strange author, alleging the claims of heaven-born Truth, and the exponent of no party views or device, may meet the approbation of an orthodox community, I can not predict, nor am I solicitous to know. But that the immutable and divine law of love, vindicated in this poem, is the true basis of Christian union upon which all men will eventually unite, or speed their own ruin in violation of natural law, I am thoroughly and solemnly convinced.

Let the reader deliberately examine the subject, and weigh each argument with candor and critical discernment, conscious that if this doctrine be of man it will come to naught; but if it be of God, no human power can prevail against it.

Alta, Iowa, November 19, 1874.

THE AUTHOR.

THE HAPPY CHRISTIAN.

Who is the Happy Christian? Who is he
Like whom all Christians should aspire to be?
He is the Happy Christian whose delight
Arises with the tranquil reign of Right,
Or falls with Faith unconquered, to arise,
And reign with Truth, triumphant in the skies.

He is the Happy Christian whose employ
By Nature was designed to furnish joy;
Whose own experience doth amply prove
That Virtue's fruits are peace, and joy, and love;
Whose understanding of the natural code
Doth cause his heart to trust in Nature's God;
And whose contentment with Creation's plan
Doth make him reverence himself as Man.

He is the Happy Christian who doth feel
Desirous of his own and others' weal;
Who also doth instinctively discern
A power of mind, which reasons in its turn;
And still another, in its nature so
Appointed that its office is to know;
And whose affections and whose judgment join,
For pleasure and for profit all condign,
Result in action, or in word or deed,
And amplify his knowledge to his need.

He is the happy saint who doth rejoice
To exercise the right of moral choice;
And, though chastised for evil actions, still
Whose sentiments are subject to his will,
Whose will is subject to his judgment, and,

In sooth, whatever he may understand,
Affords no counter-current to the joy
That flows from reason's accurate employ.

He is the Happy Christian who surveys
The laws of nature's varied works and ways,
And reads in each phenomenon of nature
A thought or purpose of the great Creator.
Or, though he fail to read God's full design,
Doth fain enjoy the gift of love divine,
Nor e'er deny that God is wise and good,
Because he hath not fashioned man a god.

He is the Happy Christian who believes
Man should deserve all blessings he receives ;
And, though dependent on the grace of God
For power to work for evil or for good,
Holds also that, when man his Maker serves,
He should receive all blessings he deserves.

Accordingly, when man shall sin or err,
He too should bear the ills his faults incur.
Yet who shall say, of wickedness or woe,
God hath ordained that man should make it so ?
Hath He not given to action proper sway ?
By granting man the right to choose the way ?
Hath He not given to man the power to know
The consequence of doing so and so ?
What the conclusion ? Are we not agreed,
He is the sponsor who commits the deed ?
Hence, to be happy, man must comprehend
The laws of life ; and carefully attend
Unto his choice ; and, choosing for the best,
He may be sure he will be amply blest.

He is the Happy Christian who doth trust,
Believing God both merciful and just ;
Who, when the sun shines in its strength, is glad
To know it shineth on both good and bad ;
Who, when the rain descends from summer skies,
Exults to see all vegetation rise ;

Who, when the harvest comes, give thanks to God,
Whose mercy blesseth earning toil with food ?
And who is knowing to the happy truth,
Heaven hath no more of wisdom than of ruth.

He is the Happy Christian who doth know
The purpose of his being here below ;
And knowing, doth employ his time aright,
Content to share the consequent delight.

He, of all Christians, is most happy, then,
Whose love extends to all his fellow-men ;
Whose knowledge of the nature of the mind
Enables him to educate mankind
For life and duty, happiness and Heaven,
According to the natural talents given ;
Whose practice of the principles of right
Is to the world a bright and shining light,
To lead them on, from Superstition's gloom,
Throughout Religion's verdant fields of bloom,
Or should his mission only be at home,
E'en there the friendly Christian graces come,
Like angel visitors, to chide or cheer,
And sanctify Religion's smile or tear.

Yes, happy is the Christian worker who
Doth love mankind, and labor for them too ;
Who acts, most worthy of the Christian name,
To show self-love and social still the same ;
Who, in whatever sphere his lot is cast,
Doth live resolved to labor to the last ;
And e'en though instinct cause his hand to move,
Reaps the reward of labor and of love.

He is the Happy Christian who doth find
His greatest riches centered in his mind ;
Who, by his own example, tries to teach
Only such morals as mankind can reach,
And whose own life and character proclaim
His just profession of the Christian name.

He is the Happy Christian whose desires

Instinctive rise to all that truth requires ;
Whose moral actions, and whose quiet mien,
Show to all others what they might have been ;
Whose good advice, to others kindly given,
Renders their path of duty smooth and even ;
Whose soul exults to know the blissful truth,
That mortal age is but immortal youth ;
Whose sins are wept, although they be but few,
As flowers weep their tears of morning dew ;
Whose heart is ever willing to forgive ;
Whose life is spent in learning how to live ;
Whose soul its earnest purpose hath avowed,
True to his friends, his country, and his God.

He is the Happy Christian who obeys
The laws of life ; who follows Wisdom's ways ;
Whose prudence wins the votary of renown ;
Whose patience softens every burden down ;
Whose trials strengthen, and whose triumphs cheer ;
Who worships God through love, and not through
fear ;

Whose own industry every want supplies ;
In God who trusts, on Him alone relies.

He is the Happy Christian who doth give
His very life to learning how to live ;
Who loves to know and practice truth and right ;
Who finds in simple duty sweet delight ;
Who, though contented, still aspires to rise,
And, though ambitious, aims but to be wise ;
Who, in prosperity, doth keep good cheer,
And, in adversity, doth persevere ;
 n resignation deigns to kiss the rod,
An heir of Heaven and a child of God.

He is the Happy Christian in whose mien
No other pride than honest pride is seen ;
And doubly blest with comfort and content,
That man whose life in liberty is spent—
True liberty, untrammelled by the laws

Ambition weaves to win the world's applause ;
Freedom from all those petty courtesies
From which no glories but vain glories rise—
Oh, heaven! how blest that man whose heart is free
To share the blessings of true liberty,
True pride, true holiness, true faith,
True life, unshaken by the dread of death.

Such is the Happy Christian. Such, I ken,
Is worthy of the best esteem of men,
Yet such, dear reader, Christian though he be,
Seeks not thy approbation. Certainly
His happiness consists in consciousness
Of moral worth, and real righteousness,
Won by and through the simple means of grace
Provided by the Ruler of the race.

Yes, truth is plain ; and Jesus hath declared
The plan of man's redemption is prepared.
And all that truth and nature's God require
Is that each heart to happiness aspire,
Till each, by other aided, shall arise
To reap the mental harvest of the wise ;
Till Falsehood crumble at the feet of Truth,
And Eden bloom is bright, perennial youth.

Behold the world in action! Is there aught
Hath power to stay the current of free thought ?
All men assent, despite contending pride,
That nature, truth, and reason coincide.
Howbeit, men may differ, and prefer,
Some, Christian faith, some, Christian character ;
Nor yet agree, though if the truth be shown,
Each knows a truth to other yet unknown :
Each party only partly comprehend
The means of reaching man's or nature's ends ,
For what were worth or wisdom to mankind,
If faith and virtue may not work combined ?

So too, thank God, whatever men may claim,
Their doctrines are essentially the same ;

Or parts, at most, of one momentous truth,
Half unexplored by Science in her youth.
Thus men may reason, and may differ too,
Till truth eternal rise upon our view,
Nor e'er cease working in the *Christian* cause,
While life and reason act by natural laws.

Methinks the "good time coming" close at hand,
When Christians happily may understand
The Word of God, and honestly profess
That FAITH AND VIRTUE—nothing more nor less—
Compose the means of God's redeeming grace,
The free salvation of the human race.

E'en now the churches meet in free communion,
Auspicious omen of true Christian union!
'Tis well that all who own the Christian name
Should rate their rights and duties quite the same.
Or if in doctrine men may war at will,
Let Conscience say to Reason, "Peace, be still ;"
Or Kindness take the Bible from the shelf,
Suggesting, "Love thy neighbor as thyself."
Thus will Contention and Dissension flee,
Before the light of Truth and Charity ;
And Heaven look down, and smilingly approve,
And sanctify the children of His love.

Alas ! to see so many modern fools
En route rebellion to religious rules ;
While yet we know, e'en in our best estate,
Delight and duty are commensurate.

What, then, is joy ? 'Tis satisfaction given
By peace on earth and hope of bliss in heaven.
But peace abounds where Truth and Freedom reign,
And Man and Nature all their rights maintain.
And hope of bliss in heaven ? Arouse, O Soul,
And view thy prospects rise from self-control ;
From sweet submissiveness to Nature's code,
Love of mandkind and reverence of God.

All hail, let the divine example move ;

Our mission is a mission of true love.
What though our knowledge differ in degree,
Doth knowledge measure Christian charity?
What though in doctrine men may differ still,
Doth argument the law of love fulfill?
O Man, why trifle with God's Holy Word?
Is Jesus not the real Son of God?
This fundamental truth—the Christian Creed—
Is plain to all men, as all men concede.
So, since all truth fades in the light of this,
As earthly joys compared with heavenly bliss;
Since once our Savior suffered on the Cross,
That heaven might not be lacking by our loss;
And since our Prince and Pilot bids us come,
To share the glories of his golden home,—
By the immortal energies of mind,
Let us, in faith, employ the means designed
To aid our growth and perfect us in love;
All hail, let the divine example move!

Ye sons of light, whose spirits long to share
The bliss of which the Christian is an heir;
Ye, whose religion is the love of God;
Whose interest the universal good;
Whose joy the quiet reign of sacred truth;
Whose hope the prospect of perennial youth,—
O, ye who claim the Scripture promise given,
Why should opinions bar us out of heaven?

Say, brother, dost thou love and honor God?
Dost tread the path the Christian Fathers trod?
Dost thou believe that Jesus died to save
The world from sin, and sorrow, and the grave?
Dost thou feel grateful for such love as this,
To shed his blood that we might share his bliss?
Dost thou exert thy influence to prove
The sacred worth of God's redeeming love?
Dost love thy brother as thyself, and pray
For grace and strength to walk the heavenly way?

Dost aim to keep undue contention down?
Dost bear the cross, and hope to wear the crown?
Dost treat poor, blind humanity with ruth?
Dost worship God, in spirit and in truth?
I'll call thee brother, friend, for such thou art,
Though our opinions range world-wide apart.
Two different minds, two different modes of thought,
Two different beings, differently taught;
Yet, if we both accept the Christian Creed,
And, by its precepts, Christian lives we lead,
Where is the man whose judgment hath avowed
One is, and one is not, a child of God?

Enough, enough; what more can truth require,
Than that each heart to happiness aspire—
True happiness, true piety, true love,
Encircling all below and all above!

'Tis useless still to argue. All agree
True freedom reigns alone when all are free;
All men believe a part that they are told,
All men will worship, be it God or gold.
Let this suffice. The truth hath come to light:
Men need but worship and believe aright.
Or, if aught else, 'tis only to employ
All faith and knowledge in true love and joy—
A love that worketh for Religion's prize
A joy serene as Heaven's paradise.

Ten priceless jewels crown the Christian heart,
Known by the fruits of spirit they impart:
Faith, Fortitude, and Knowledge first combine,
And prompt to duty at Devotion's shrine;
Next comes the sweet peace-angel, Self-control,
The mental poise, and watchman of the soul;
While Temperance, Patience, Godliness unite,
The source of virtue, honor, and delight;
Next Charity, the humble Christian's crown,
And Brotherly kindness, keep contention down,
Preserve the equilibrium of devoir,

THE HAPPY CHRISTIAN.

And smooth those elements of faith that jar ;
Lastly, the fairest jewel in the crown,
Upon which smiling angel-eyes look down,
Comes heaven-born Love, the universal tie
That links mankind to spirit-worlds on high ;
And him whose plans these principles embrace,
High Heaven hath marked and sealed a child of
grace.

Oh, would all men were wise to know the need
Of blest obedience to the Christian Creed ?
To all who will God's means of grace employ,
The fount of knowledge is the fount of joy.

Let all who choose bask in superfluous wealth ;
He is most happy who enjoys good health ;
Who, temperate in habit, mild in mood,
Endeavors to promote the general good ;
Whose reason holds the rigid reign of right,
To govern fickle Impulse in her flight ;
Who seeks the highest interests of his soul ;
Whose moral sentiments keep kind control
Of his propensities ; and whose employ
Religion renders redolent with joy.

So, choose content, O happy child of mirth,
To found thy present joys on real worth.
Think not thy happiness thy being's end,
Nor yet thy knowledge. By these means amend
Thy faults and others' as thou canst contrive ;
A joy awaits thee that will long survive.

Dost pleasure seek ? Thy gracious Ruler please :
Thy Maker's glory, and thy manner's ease,
Consist in consciousness of God-renowned,
Heartfelt religion, soul-wept, virtue-crowned.

Ah ! what avail the brightest boons of heaven,
If man neglect to use the powers given ?
Let healthful exercise promote thy bliss.
What pleasure canst thou relish more than this
Toil and be glad. True pleasure thou wilt find

In cultivation of thy heart and mind.
When life's bright morning dawns with ray serene,
When life's high noon-tide brightens all the green,
When life's calm evening settles in repose,—
Then be preparing for life's peaceful close ;
Youth's budding beauty, manhood's noble mein,
Old age's silvery locks, complete the scene ;
And happy he who, parting, leaves behind
A token he was ever good and kind :
A tiny drop of Christian charity
May echo in the long eternity,
Enrich thy being by reflecting rays
Of golden transport on thy dawning days,
And thrill thy soul with rapture in reply,
"Kind words, good works, can never, never die."



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